Name _____ Date _____

CHAPTER 24

Section 3

PRIMARY SOURCE

Nationalist Speech

by Otto von Bismarck

On April 1, 1895, German nationalist Otto von Bismarck delivered a speech to a delegation of students in Friedrichsruh on his 80th birthday. He reviewed key events that led to the unification of Germany and promoted the idea of German unity. As you read part of this speech, consider his hopes and dreams for future generations of Germans.

Gentlemen! I have just heard from the lips of your teachers, the leaders of higher education, an appreciation of my past, which means much to me. From your greeting, I infer a promise for the future, and this means even more for a man of my years than his love of approbation. You will be able, at least many of you, to live according to the sentiments which your presence here today reveals, and to do so to the middle of the next century, while I have long been condemned to inactivity and belong to the days that are past. I find consolation in this observation, for the German is not so constituted that he could entirely dismiss in his old age what in his youth inspired him. Forty and sixty years hence you will not hold exactly the same views as today, but the seed planted in your young hearts by the reign of Emperor William I will bear fruit, and even when you grow old, your attitude will ever be German national because it is so today. . . .

We had to win our national independence in difficult wars. The preparation, the prologue, was the Holstein war. We had to fight with Austria for a settlement; no court of law could have given a decree of separation; we had to fight. That we were facing French war after our victory at Sadowa could not remain in doubt for anyone who knew the conditions of Europe. . . . After the war had been waged everybody here was saying that within five years we should have to wage the next war. This was to be feared it is true, but I have ever since considered it to be my duty to prevent it. We Germans had no longer any reason for war. We had what we needed. To fight for more, from a lust of conquest and for the annexation of countries which were not necessary for us always appeared to me like an atrocity; I am tempted to say like a Bonapartistic and a foreign atrocity, alien to the Germanic sense of justice. . . .

The men who made the biggest sacrifices that the empire might be born were undoubtedly the German princes, not excluding the king of Prussia. My old master hesitated long before he voluntarily yielded his independence to the empire. Let us then be thankful to the reigning houses who made sacrifices for the empire which after the full thousand years of German history must have been hard for them to make. . . .

I would then—and you will say I am an old, conservative man—compress what I have to say into these words: Let us keep above everything the things we have, before we look for new things, nor be afraid of those people who begrudge them to us. In Germany struggles have existed always. . . . Life is a struggle everywhere in nature, and without inner struggles we end by being like the Chinese, and become petrified. No struggle, no life! Only, in every fight where the national question arises, there must be a rallying point. For us this is the empire, not as it may seem to be desirable, but as it is, the empire and the emperor, who represents it. That is why I ask you to join me in wishing well to the emperor and the empire. I hope that in 1950 all of you who are still living will again respond with contented hearts to the toast.

LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR AND THE EMPIRE!

from Louis L. Snyder, *The Blood and Iron Chancellor: A Documentary–Biography of Otto von Bismarck* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1967), 375–378.

Activity Options

1. ***Recognizing Point of View*** Discuss Bismarck's thoughts about German nationalism with a group of classmates. Then compare Bismarck's ideas with the nationalist sentiments of Bolívar (page 63) and Garibaldi (page 65).
2. ***Using Aural Stimuli*** Deliver this speech excerpt to the class. Try to use a tone of voice and a rate of speaking that will most effectively convey Bismarck's message.

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